

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Subcontract Agreement between the University of Michigan and Amphionic LLC

Action Requested: Authorization to enter into Agreement

Preamble:

A statutory conflict of interest situation was identified by the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects while reviewing the Proposal Approval Form which then triggered a review by the UMOR Conflict of Interest Review Committee. A plan for management of the possible risks associated with the conflict of interest was then developed and approved by the Committee and agreed to by the parties involved.

This proposed agreement (“Agreement”) falls under the State of Michigan Conflict of Interest Statute because Professor Mark Hammig is an employee of the University of Michigan (“University”), and a partial owner of Amphionic LLC. The law permits such an Agreement provided it is disclosed to the Board of Regents (“Regents”) of the University of Michigan and approved in advance by a 2/3 vote.

Background:

Dr. Mark Hammig, an Associate Research Scientist in the Department of Nuclear Engineering and Radiological Sciences, is the partial owner of a for-profit company called Amphionic LLC (the “Company”). The Company wishes to fund a NASA (prime) SBIR Phase II project entitled “Dust-free fabrication of uranium and plutonium oxide powders for radioisotope systems, nuclear thermal rockets, nuclear electric propulsion, and surface power reactors” (ORSP #19-PAF05305) in the Department of Nuclear Engineering and Radiological Sciences under the direction of Dr. Hammig. The purpose of this project is to develop a fabrication method for nuclear fuels that can be universally applied for space-power systems that utilize a dust-free uranium and plutonium oxide production unit coupled to a spark-plasma-sintering chamber.

Agreement Terms:

The terms of the Agreement conform to University policy. The period of performance for the project is approximately two (2) years. The amount of funding support will not exceed \$209,574. Since research projects are often amended, this agreement includes provisions for changes in time and scope. University procedures for approval of these changes will be followed and additional conflict of interest review will be done as appropriate.

Impact of the Agreement:

The Agreement will support an effort by Dr. Hammig to use his expertise and University laboratory, as well as other University resources, to develop a fabrication method for nuclear fuels to replace the traditional methods of fabricating nuclear fuel that pose inhalation health hazards that would otherwise lead to worker injury or high environmental logistical burdens.

Recommendations:

This matter has been reviewed and approved by the UMOR Conflict of Interest Review Committee. In light of this disclosure and our finding that the Agreement was negotiated in conformance with standard University practices, I recommend that the Board of Regents approve the University's entering into this Agreement with Amphionic LLC.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Jack Hu', is positioned above the printed name.

S. Jack Hu
Vice President for Research

May 2019